

... this land is a state of mind that declares  
its independence from the mother world each day  
  
when cocks crow citizens stare at their hands  
stunned to find themselves still in their bodies

## PLAGUE

"London might well be said to be all in tears; the  
mourners did not go about the streets indeed, for  
nobody put on black, or made a formal dress of  
mourning; but the voice of mourning was truly heard  
in the streets; the shrieks of women and children at  
the windows and doors of their houses, where their  
nearest relations were, perhaps dying, or just  
dead ....

-- Daniel Defoe, Journal of the Plague Year

grandfather laid with her  
in his coal miner's shed  
he paid flesh and she made  
his face into the moon's

we did not want her to play  
and tried to chase her off  
with stones still she came  
to size up our plump legs

she gave us her red badge  
to pin on our cheeks father  
nailed paper on the door  
to drive her from the house

she stayed and we kept her  
scars dwarfed limbs a wheeze  
of breath that is her name  
I hold her in my heart

she still can make it tick  
or throb like a beserk clock  
and my children play toward  
the time she walks the streets

again with another name  
that makes children go chill  
and fathers will blame germs --  
anything to explain her work

except embedded in seeds  
we pass on father to son  
the memory of her first kiss  
steel hard drawing her home